

## **REVIWE**

By Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Hristov Poudin, PhD, professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Defence and Security Management, Foundations of Security Policy)", Department "National and Regional Security", UNWE, on scientific publications, teaching, research and public activity for participation in a competition for appointment to the academic position "Associate Professor", professional field 9.1. National Security, SG No. 28/02.04.2024, with candidate Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Vasileva Sidova

### **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University**

It is obvious from the materials submitted for this competition that the candidate Chief Assistant Professor Dr Dafinka Sidova has met the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University (NBU). Something more. The required minimum for appointment to the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 9.1. National Security at the NBU is 570 points. The candidate has presented a total score of 757.5 points with scores on the indicators from some of the groups exceeding the minimum. For example, Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Dafinka Sidova has 255 points regarding the indicators related to the publications, while the required minimum is 200 points. She has achieved 102.5 points regarding the citation indicators, while the minimum score for this particular group of indicators is 50 points. It is the same with regard to social activity, additional commitment and initiative indicators, where the candidate has achieved 60 points out of a minimum of 50 points. Regarding teaching activity indicators, she has achieved 100 points out of a minimum of 70 points. Regarding commitment to the university indicators, including participation in various academic management structures, she has declared 90 points with a minimum of 50 points. Dr. Dafinka Sidova has the required 50 points for the indicator from Group A (dissertation for the award of the ESD "Doctor") and the required 100 points for the indicator from Group B (habilitation book - published monograph in the relevant scientific field).

### **II. Research activity and results**

The monograph, which has been submitted for the competition, titled "Human security through European Territorial Cooperation - Benefits, Challenges, Perspectives /the Example of the Republic of Bulgaria/" consists of 282 standard pages (without the two reviews). It is structured in an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, three appendices, a bibliography. At the end of the book there is a summary in English. 21 diagrams, 15 maps, 59 tables and 5 figures are attached. They are all listed as it follows: in a List of Diagrams, a List of Maps, a List of Tables and a List of Figures.

The author of the monograph, Chief Assist. Prof. Dr Dafinka Sidova has studies an extremely topical, important and interesting problem from both a scientific and a practical-applied point of view. This is the problem of guaranteeing human security. This is a matter in the focus of the activity of many international organizations. It is constantly on the agenda of national governments. It is also an issue that every single person faces in his/her daily life. In this case, the attention is focused on the contribution of European Territorial Cooperation to the achievement of a higher level of human security.

In the Introduction, Dr. Sidova has explained the topicality of the topic and, to a certain extent, her motivation for writing the paper, by pointing out: first, "the growing importance of human security not only as a scientific term, but as a comprehensive concept, which is being established as a top priority in policies and documents at the international level..." and secondly, "the scarcity of Bulgarian publications focusing on the benefits of European Territorial Cooperation for human security...".

The object and subject of the research have been precisely defined. The human security, accepted by the author as a "criterion for constructivism", is object of the research. The European territorial cooperation with its three dimensions - cross-border, transnational and interregional, accepted as a "criterion of functionality", as well as its importance for ensuring human security with its three pillars and seven dimensions is subject of the research.

The objective of the monograph has been clearly defined, namely "to examine the results achieved by cross-border, transnational and interregional projects, with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria, through which freedom from fear, freedom from scarcity and freedom for a dignified life are ensured, to identify positives and negatives, to examine challenges and prospects for development and to formulate recommendations concerning the current program period 2021-2027". This main objective has been achieved through accomplishment of five research tasks.

The main hypothesis, which has been formulated and which has been confirmed in the course of the study, states that "European territorial cooperation has the capacity (both of a qualitative and quantitative nature) to ensure human security, however, its capacity is not used sufficiently by the Republic of Bulgaria, which results in limiting the benefits to human security, especially in the context of the benefits of cross-border and inter-regional cooperation."

The scientific research in the monograph has been based on several research approaches, including historical, empirical, interdisciplinary, analytical, comparative, structuring of information sources etc. and several methods, such as: observation, induction, periodic and analytical review, theoretical analysis, conceptual analysis, processing of empirical data, comparative analysis, trend analysis, deduction, visualization of information through tables, figures, etc.

Five main limitations, which contribute to the better focus of the study, has been pointed out.

The main part of the monograph includes five chapters, which follow the implementation of the five research tasks, which have been declared in the introduction. The contributions of the monograph, formulated by the candidate in the report on the contributions, can be accept as original and received in the course of the research.

The contributions could be grouped into two groups – research (or scientific) contributions and applied (or practical) contributions.

Research contributions include:

- the essence and characteristics of the concept of human security has been clarified, the reasons for its emergence and development has been analysed, a comparison has made with another current concept - the Concept of "broad security" and its relationship with the Concept of national security, the Concept of human rights and the Concept of human development have been discussed (First chapter of the monograph);
- a conceptual framework for conducting the research has been proposed, two criteria have been formulated - a criterion for constructivism (actually these are the three pillars of human security and its seven dimensions) and a criterion for functionality (actually this is the European Territorial Cooperation with its three constituent elements), the essence of these two

criteria and the interrelation between them have been discussed (Second chapter of the monograph);

Applied contributions, which have been defined through application of the particular conceptual framework, are as follows:

- specific benefits of cross-border cooperation to ensure freedom from fear, including political, personal and health security have been analysed, tendencies have been outlined and recommendations have been formulated (Chapter Three of the monograph);
- specific benefits of transnational cooperation to ensure freedom from scarcity, including economic and food security, have been analysed, tendencies have been outlined and recommendations have been formulated (Chapter Four of the monograph);
- specific benefits of interregional cooperation to ensure freedom for a decent life, covering ecological and community security, have been analysed, tendencies have been outlined and recommendations have been formulated (Chapter Five of the monograph).

Generally, the monograph is a completed and an original, free of plagiarism, scientific paper, which is a result of a systematic and thorough research activity, conducted during the last several years. It is dedicated to a very topical and significant problem, studied by the author, namely the problem of the human security and its ensuring.

Taking into account the fact that until now there is no other similar study in Bulgaria (at least I am not aware of), which has been focused on the importance of European Territorial Cooperation for ensuring human security within the specific conceptual framework, the publication has an undisputable contribution. It is a good basis for further scientific studies and may set their possible directions.

The research results, presented in the monograph, may support decision-making at different levels of government and thus may contribute to increasing the different dimensions of human security in our country through the mechanisms of European Territorial Cooperation.

In addition to all this, the research would also support the training of students, studying disciplines related to human security. It would be useful to a wide range of readers interested in human security matters.

In addition to the monograph, Dr Dafinka Sidova has presented another 25 publications for participation in the competition, including: 1 book based on a successfully defended dissertation for awarding of ESD "Doctor", 19 reports. She is author of 10 of these publications and co-author of 9 of them. The reports are published in edited collective volumes, a study, also published in an edited collective volume, a chapter of a collective monograph, and 3 publications other than publications presented for awarding of ESD "Doctor".

The publications, submitted by the candidate for her participation in the competition, corresponds to the main topics of her research interests: human security with its dimensions, territorial cooperation with its three main forms - cross-border, transnational and interregional, as well as other contemporary security problems, including radicalization, crime, environmental security, etc.

The publications of Chief Assist. Prof. Dr Dafinka Sidova have not only scientific contributions, but also applied ones. All of them have been summarised by the candidate in the Reference for original scientific contributions and it is possible to be identified after reviewing the publications. For example, in a chapter titled Human Security, written by the candidate and published in a collective monograph "Sustainable urban development - lessons for Sofia", two contributions may be identified. The first one is the implementation of a SWOT analysis regarding the human security system in the Municipality of Sofia, based on an expert assessment in order to identify the most significant strengths and weaknesses,

opportunities and threats. The second contribution is the developed TOWS analysis, through which four strategies are formulated, with a recommendatory nature for the period 2021-2027, the purpose of which is to improve the role of the human security system in the Municipality of Sofia in terms of sustainable urban development.

The candidate's publications are well known to the scientific community, involved in the study of different security issues. This is evident from the list of citations, which she has submitted, including 16 citations of 10 different publications, including 7 citations in monographs and collective peer-reviewed volumes and 9 citations in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr Dafinka Sidova has participated in and has managed several scientific and educational projects, including financed by the Central Fund for Strategic Development of the Board of Trustees of the NBU. For example, one of these projects is the educational project "Third Traveling Seminar in Criminology - "St. Anastasia Island - Island of Hope", in which 7 students (4 bachelors and 3 masters) participated. The project was implemented in May 2022. Generally speaking, the results of these projects are high. They improve and make the learning process of students more interesting by giving opportunities for learning through practical experience. In addition, these projects facilitate and stimulate communication between the participants, as well as the sharing of ideas, the discussion of real problems, etc.

### **III. Teaching Activity**

The candidate Chief Assistant Professor Dr Dafinka Sidova carries out active teaching activities. She teaches several courses in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Civil and Corporate Security, as well as in the Master's Degree Programs in National and International Security and Criminology and Crime Prevention Policies of the Department of National and International Security at the NBU.

Her annual workload for the academic year 2023/2024, as she has written in her self-evaluation report, exceeds the required hours of 180 auditorium hours and 60 training hours. Her workload is as follows - a total of 264 auditorium hours and 420 hours of non-auditorium/training hours.

Her auditorium hours consist of the auditorium hours in the following disciplines: SECB003 Security Concepts, SECB023 Policy and Security Factors, SECB728 Migration, Refugees and Border Control, SECB758 Preventing and Countering Criminal Behaviour, SECB759 Ethics and Criminology, NISM124 Diplomatic and Consular Law, CRIM202 Personality of the Criminal, NISM220 Human Security.

Her training hours consist of the following training hours: SECB729 Seminar: Migration, Refugees and Border Control, NISM325 Internship: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SECB032 Seminar: Contemporary Challenges, Risks and Threats to National and International Security, SECB887 Criminology Seminar, CRIM166 Project: Personality of the Criminal, NISM282 Project: Human Security.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr Dafinka Sidova has developed a new academic course NISM307 Combating Environmental Crime for the Master's Degree Program "National and International Security" from the 2023/24 catalogue, semester 3.

In addition, she has updated and developed the following academic courses: SECB023 Policy and Security Factors (two-semester), SECB728 Migration, Refugees and Border Control, SECB758 Preventing and Countering Criminal Behaviour, SECB759 Ethics and Criminology taught to students in the Bachelor's Degree Program "Civil and Corporate Security".

Her courses are provided with the appropriate author's materials in printed form or in "Moodle NBU". E.g. NISM277 Security and Cooperation in the European Space and

NISM220 Human Security from the Master's Degree Program "National and International Security"

Chief Assistant Professor Dr Dafinka Sidova has been a supervisor of graduate students and a reviewer of student's theses. Within the period spring semester 2019/2020 - spring semester 2022/2023 she was a supervisor of 9 graduate students and prepared 7 review reports. Since the academic year 2022/23, she has been the tutor of 13 bachelor students from 9 bachelor programs, such as: "Civil and Corporate Security", "Informatics", "Information Technology", "Business Management and Entrepreneurship", "Philosophy", "Tourism Management", "Graphic Design", "German Studies (with a second foreign language English)", "English Studies (English Language, Culture and Literature)".

She has been a member of state examination boards.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr Dafinka Sidova has initiated the making cooperation agreements with various organizations in the country, including with the Diplomatic Institute under the Minister of Foreign Affairs, etc. The main purpose of these agreements is to provide practices and internships for students. She is among the organizers of a number of other events in which students from the Department „National and International Security“ and other departments of the NBU actively participate, including conferences, youth forums, traveling seminars, public lectures, etc.

The average score from the surveys on students' satisfaction with the course and lecturer, which Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova has received, is 4.85 out of a maximum of 5. This is a high rating that objectively reflects the quality of her teaching activity.

#### **IV. Administrative and public activity**

Chief Associate Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova has a rich administrative experience and demonstrates remarkable social activity.

As a Bachelor student, she was elected member of the NBU Student Council within the period 2009-2010 and member of the NBU Academic Council within the period 2010-2011. As a volunteer, intern or employee, before starting her teaching career, she participated in the work of various units at the NBU.

From October 2017, already as a lecturer, to September 2022 she was a member of the Program Council of the Department "National and International Security". Since October 1 2022 until now she has been director of the same Program Council. In addition, since December 2022 Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova has been a member of the Council of the Bachelor's Faculty.

As Dr. Sidova herself has pointed out, she "participates in active academic, administrative and public activities of the Department „National and International Security“ - conferences, seminars, projects, accreditation working groups, working groups for internal and external audits, etc.". These participations are presented in detail in the materials presented for the competition.

Dr. Dafinka Sidova has actively participated in the organization of a majority of academic events, e.g. student conferences and colloquiums, youth forums, traveling seminars, public lectures, meetings with experts, etc. She has attracted as participants in some of these events students from the Department „National and International Security“, as well as from other departments of the NBU.

She works, as she has stated, "in excellent collaboration with colleagues from other departments to implement interdisciplinary/interdepartmental initiatives."

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova has initiated the signing of cooperation agreements (including agreement related to conducting practices and internships for the students) with the Diplomatic Institute of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the "Campaign

A21" foundation, operating in the field of combating human trafficking, with the associations "Bulgarian Hub for the United Balkans" and "Cluster for Integration of Emerging Technologies".

She is a member of the Bulgarian Community for Liberal Democracy /BOLD/, within which she participates as an expert on security policies and strategies.

#### **V. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)**

I have known the candidate Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova since 2017-2018, when she, as a doctoral student at the Department "National and International Security", already gained and gaining research and administrative experience, was taking her first successful steps as a lecturer. In 2018, I was invited by her supervisor, Prof. Dr. Venelin Georgiev, to be a member of the scientific jury, before which she successfully defended her dissertation work on "Cross-border Cooperation as an Instrument of the European Union to Increase Security in the Mediterranean region at the Beginning of the 21st Century" and thus she was awarded ESD "Doctor", professional field 9.1 National Security.

After that, after her appointment as "Assistant" (October 2018) and as "Chief Assistant Professor" (July 2020) me and Prof. Dr. Tilcho Ivanov, with whom we jointly thought the SECB010 Security and Defence Management courses and NISM211D Economics and Security course, had professional contact with her regarding the teaching process. In 2022, I had the pleasure of reviewing her first book "Cross-Border Cooperation and "Broad Security" in the Mediterranean Region at the Beginning of the 21st Century", developed on the basis of her dissertation work, and in 2023 I reviewed her second monograph, her habilitation book, "Human Security through European Territorial Cooperation - Benefits, Challenges, Perspectives /the example of the Republic of Bulgaria/".

All this gave me the opportunity to get to know the candidate's personal characteristics and especially her research skills.

In my opinion Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova is a serious researcher, who always conducts very comprehensive studies. She focuses her scientific research on extremely topical and significant, but at the same time quite challenging problems, which go beyond the scope of the traditional understanding of security. In many of her works, she has not hesitated to focus her attention on poorly developed research issues in Bulgaria.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova demonstrates research courage and innovation, both in terms of choosing a focus of her work, and in terms of the approaches and variety of methods that she successfully applies. All this is combined with solid academic training, excellent awareness of various security issues, hardworking, diligence, consistency, as well as compliance with all the requirements of the scientific ethics.

#### **VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the candidate's activity and achievements**

I am sure that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova (after the meeting of the respected scientific jury - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dafinka Sidova) will continue to maintain a high level of research, teaching and public activity. That is why I recommend to her:

- in a short term, if possible, to publish her monograph in English, this will allow a wider distribution of the results of her work;
- in a medium term, to increase the number of its publications in refereed and indexed world-famous databases with scientific information;
- in a long term, to focus her efforts on meeting the requirements of awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences".

## **VII. Conclusion**

Taking into consideration the submitted materials for participation in this competition and the results from the objective assessment of the Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova's research, teaching and public activity, it may be concluded that she has met the requirements for the academic position "Associate Professor" at the NBU. By all appearances, she is an erudite lecturer and conscientious researcher, enjoying the trust of her students and the respect of the scientific community in the country.

All this gives me reason to highly and positively evaluate Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova's overall work and to propose her candidacy to be accepted for election by the Academic Council of the NBU for appointment to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 9. Security and Defence, professional field 9.1. National Security at the Department „National and International Security“ at the NBU.

Date: 22.07.2024

Signature: .....  
/Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Poudin, PhD/